

IOWA BOARD OF NURSING

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In RE: Petition for	)	Declaratory Ruling No. 81
Declaratory Ruling Filed By:	)	
Lesle J. Kouba, RN, BSN	)	Administration of Natural
Lynn Shumate, RN	)	Remedies and Supplements to
November 21, 1995	)	School Children at the Request
	)	of Their Parents or Guardians
	)	by Registered School Nurses
	)	During the School Day

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A petition for declaratory ruling was filed with the Iowa Board of Nursing by Lesle J. Kouba, RN, BSN, and Lynn Shumate, RN, on November 21, 1995.

The Board is authorized to issue declaratory rulings "as to the applicability of any statutory provision, rule, or other written statement of law or policy, decision, or order of the agency" pursuant to Iowa Code § 17A.9 (1995). See also 655 IAC 9.

The specific question presented in the petition is as follows:

What is the position of the Iowa Board of Nursing regarding the administration of natural remedies and supplements to school children, at the request of their parents or guardians, by registered school nurses during the school day?

In declaratory ruling number 3, the board determined that the Code of Iowa and the Iowa Administrative Code do not forbid administration of over-the-counter medications by a registered

nurse. In this decision, the RN, using education and experience, may determine that the use of over-the-counter medication, ordered by a parent, is appropriate care for some children. Likewise, the RN may determine that an over-the-counter medication, ordered by a parent, could be detrimental to the child. In this case the RN may refuse to administer the medication and state the reasons, in writing, to the parent. The registered nurse is accountable for using nursing judgment in making a decision about the appropriateness of the medication being given and for the safety and well-being of the student.

In this petition, the essence of the question is related to the registered nurse administering natural remedies and supplements. Today, some families are turning to alternative resources for health care, including the use of substances purchased in health food stores for preventative health care and for the treatment of a wide variety of medical conditions. Parents request that they be administered by school nurses as over-the-counter medications.

The petitioners have asked that parents administer these substances to their children at home, outside of school hours, or have asked that parents administer the substances to their children themselves during the school day. The petitioners based

this decision on declaratory ruling number 3, "The Administration of OTC Medications by School Nurses."

The petitioners state the possibility of potential for injury to the child exists since the nurses are unable to determine the appropriateness, safety, possible side effects, or toxic effects of these substances. The petitioners do not want to administer substances that do not meet the same standards as regular drugs. The petitioners also feel that administration of these substances to children provides potential for personal and professional liability exposure. This concern is substantiated by information in the medical literature reporting harm that has come to persons who have used certain natural remedies on both a short-term and a long-term basis. According to a recent article in JAMA, herbal products, which may include products in the form of powders, tablets, and capsules, are not regulated by state and federal agencies and neither their safety or efficacy is guaranteed. Steven Barrett, MD, a retired psychiatrist and consumer advocate, states that federal laws which ban the sale of medicines that have not been proven to be safe and effective have not been applied to homeopathic remedies. Homeopathic medicines were "grand fathered in" because most of the substances were on

the market before passage of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938, and, as such, were exempted from regulations.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, information available from the poison control center regarding the treatment for overdose of natural remedies and substances is either nonexistent or limited. In most instances, the only treatment for overdose of these substances is supportive therapy.

In providing nursing care, including medication administration, the Iowa Board of Nursing holds the individual nurse accountable for nursing actions and decisions. In accordance with 655 IAC 6.2(5) "The registered nurse shall recognize and understand the legal implications of accountability." The nurse is expected to practice in a safe and prudent manner. When a nurse administers a drug, the nurse must be knowledgeable about the medication's actions, indications, and contraindications and the adverse effects of the drug. Fundamental to safe drug administration is that the nurse never administers an unfamiliar medication.

In keeping with the standard, the board finds that when the

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<sup>1</sup>"FDA petitioned to "Stop Homeopathy Scam," JAMA 19 Oct. 1994: 1154, 1156.

nurse is unable to determine the appropriateness, safety, possible side effects, or toxic effects of a drug, the nurse may not administer the drug. To do so would not be in compliance with 655 IAC 6.2(5). Therefore, the position of the Iowa Board of Nursing is that nurses may not administer natural remedies and supplements to school children, at the request of their parents or guardians, during the school day, when the nurse is unable to determine the appropriateness; safety; possible side effects, or toxic effects of the substance; the appropriate dose for a child of a specific age, weight, and body surface area; and treatment of overdose.

Nancy E. Knutstrom

Nancy E. Knutstrom, R.N., M.S., Ed.  
Chairperson  
Iowa Board of Nursing

February 29, 1996

Date

Lorinda K. Inman

Lorinda K. Inman, R.N., M.S.N.  
Executive Director  
Iowa Board of Nursing

February 29, 1996

Date